

Still Eleven by handsintheruck

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Summary: This story follows the aftermath of defeating the Mind Flayer. The development of new relationships and new complications. Find out how everyone deals with the traumatic events of the past.

1. Chapter 1: Ends Meet

To many people Nancy Wheeler was a plain, quiet girl that liked to focus on her studies, these many people drew judgements from brief observations, these people didn't know the real Nancy Wheeler. Jonathan Byers was one of the few people who really knew Nancy Byers. To Jonathan, Nancy was not only a gorgeous girl that he got along with, she has issues that affect her being heavily. He knew her fears and understood her emotional imbalances. He knew that she has deep anxiety problems and they make her prone to overreaction when facing adversity. Jonathan could clearly see the build up of a Nancy Wheeler anxiety attack happening at the moment.

For the past fifteen minutes Nancy had been impatiently pacing around the room. She was cursing under her breath and her hair was frizzled and messy. Jonathan had tried to distract her from the main issue at hand and delay her breakdown but she instantly dismissed him.

Joyce, Will, Jonathan and Nancy had recently returned from the cabin after they had banished the mind flayer from Will's body with the heat. They had no clue whether Hopper and El had managed to close the gate or not as they did not have the walkie talkie. Worst of all, Steve and the kids where all missing. Nancy's mind began to think the worst, she thought the demodogs might have got them. There was a mess everywhere and broken furniture which could indicate a struggle against the demodogs and there were blood stains all over the floor.

The sound of wheels driving along the gravel echoed through Nancy's ears as an unknown blue car pulled up outside the Byers' house. Nancy's grabbed the gun that was sitting on the counter to her right and armed herself against the unknown the vehicle the approached the house. The car came to a halt and five recognisable figures left the car in the shadows, there were four smaller figures and one larger figure. Nancy instantly recognised one of the smaller shapes as her little brother Mike.

Nancy sprints out the door, tears streaming down her face as she wrapper her arms around her shaking brother in a tight embrace.

After many moments holding her little brother close to her chest with a goal of never letting go she finally releases.

She turns to the larger shape who's face is still hidden in the shadows which she knew to be her former boyfriend Steve Harrington. Her arm quickly raises and strikes down against his cheek, leaving a bright red hand mark where the slap had occurred.

"Steve you fucking asshole!" Nancy uncharacteristically yells at him. "You were supposed to stay here and keep these kids safe." Whilst screaming at Steve he steps forward and she notices his bruised and bloody face.

"What the hell happened to you?" Nancy sympathetically asks.

Steve explains everything that happened with Billy and the fire. They all eventually proceed inside the house and when Mike realises El is not inside the living room.

"Where is El? Is she alright? Does anyone know anything about El? Did she close the gate? Is she safe?" Mike was interrogating everyone in the room about El's safety and whereabouts.

After his friends manage to calm him down and prevent an anxiety attack he just sits in Will's room contemplating everything that had happened tonight.

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Hours had passed and El and Hopper had still not returned home. Whilst he didn't show it, Mike was internally freaking out. It had been 353 days since he thought he'd lost her, 353 days since he'd seen her. She miraculously shows up tonight and he feels more complete than he had ever been since she'd left and straight once she returns El is sent back there into even more danger.

He couldn't stand the fact that she's in danger, over that week they spent together last year they had developed an unbreakable bond, he had grown to care for her immensely and would do anything to protect her. Whilst she was away he felt like a broken man, he liked

her so much and he wanted to be with her to hold her close to him as they deal with the stress of these traumatic events.

Mike was sitting on the stairs out front of the house when he saw the the bright headlights of the chief's SUV. He couldn't care less that the car hadn't stopped yet, he didn't care about anything else except El. Mike ran up and opened the passenger door before Hopper could even pull up, he grabbed Eleven by waist and pulled her from the SUV.

Dry blood was clearly visible under her nose, she had tears flowing down her face. El melted in Mike's embrace as time seemed to stop and their hearts raced for each other. Several silent moments passed until Mike and El released each other.

Mike turns to face Hopper, a glare of hatred forming in his eyes. "Where have you been? I thought I had lost her again."

Hopper looked down to the angry little boy and responded "Calm down kid, we had to go see Dr. Owens. He's recovering in the hospital but we needed to talk to him."

Once hearing this Mike lost all self control he thought he had and instantly grabbed El's hand before beginning his abusive rant.

"You took her back to those bastards at the lab, they will come back and take her from me, I mean us." He yelled whilst staring directly into Hopper's face.

El felt bad hearing Mike shout abuse at the chief and tried to stop him. "Mike." She softly says but he either didn't hear her or just ignored her.

"She had finally, finally comes back to us and you're risking everything." He said accusingly.

"Michael." El softly interrupts again with the same result.

"I thought you, of all people would realise how stupid it is to take her back there." Mike continues to rant to the chief.

"MIKE!" El yelled harshly, finally gaining the attention of Mike.

different options for El, first of which is she stays with him, the second is she stays with Joyce and the third is she stays with her aunt Becky.

Luckily for the chief Flo wasn't here to correct his eating habits as he grabbed the chocolate chip muffin and proceeded to his office. Upon arriving at his office he noticed Steve Harrington in there.

"What are you doing here Harrington?" Hopper questioned.

Steve turned to face the chief, the bruises on his face were still incredibly clear and obvious.

"I was wondering if we could talk Hopper?"

"Yeah sure kid, what's up?" The chief answered.

Steve was quite nervous, he had practised this at home but it was still nerve-racking doing it for real. Steve had recently decided to drop out of high school, he wasn't getting goof enough grades and he simply didn't think it would do any good if he continued there.

Steve's parents told him if he wanted to drop out of school he needed to have a plan for his future and he needed his own ways of financial security and not just rely on them. Steve and thought a lot about what he'd like to do. Since looking after those kids he'd realised that he liked looking after people. At first he thought he'd like to work in a hospital and take care of patients. Another idea he had was to work in a child care centre, like a day care.

Steve finally decided on being an officer. He enjoyed taking care of people and believed in justice, Steve wanted to uphold that justice. He thought Hopper was a great role model, Hopper doesn't give a shit about many things but he works hard and is good at what he does. That is the mentality that Steve wants to have.

"Well, I've just dropped out of school and my parents said I need to get a job." Steve told the chief

"Yeah, go on." Hopper replied

"I want to be a cop, I want to work for you." Steve told him

pleadingly.

The chief pondered over this for several moments, he wasn't in great need of more cops however Callahan was completely useless so it couldn't be too bad to have an extra pair of competent hands on the job. After much contemplation the chief told Harrington that he had a job.

The rest of the day was spent getting Steve adjusted to being a cop, Hopper was teaching Steve everything he knew about being a cop. He introduced him to Flo, Callahan and Powell and showed him all around the station. Steve even tagged along when Hopper had to go out and investigate a case.

Steve was ecstatic over the opportunity he was being given by the chief. Steve knew this was one thing he could not screw up like usual. This job will turn over a new leaf for Steve and will be the start of a successful life for him.

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After lunch Steve saw a little boy he recognised all too well walk in to the station, Mike Wheeler. He walked in and started looking around, most likely looking for the chief. Steve walked up and approached Mike.

"Hey wheeler, you need some help?" Steve asked the scrawny boy.

"I need to speak to Hopper, wait why are you here?" Mike asks.

"I work here now." Steve mentions

Mike looks up at him incredibly, what on earth was Hopper thinking when he hired this idiot. Mike thought that Hopper had made a huge mistake but he didn't have time to think about it. Mike needed to talk to Hopper about El. He wanted to organise a way that he could see her, he had waited too long to see her and he was going to make up for it.

"Chief's out at the moment, but he'll be back in about twenty minutes."

Steve grabbed out a deck of cards and asked Mike to play poker to pass the time. Mike had never played poker before and when he told him that Steve looked outraged. Steve was going to have a talk to Nancy about the poor quality of a childhood her brother had, to grow up without playing cards is unspeakable.

Steve taught Mike all the rules of poker, Steve even taught Mike how to bluff properly. When they had started Mike was a terrible bluffer but by the time Hopper had arrived back Mike was pretty good, he even beat Steve a couple times.

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"Wheeler, Harrington tells me you want to talk." Hopper faces the kid whilst sitting in his office chair.

"I need to talk to you about El. I need to see her and I want to organise times when I can come over." Mike tells the chief who's smoking a cigarette

"Alright kid, we don't know what El's permanent living situation is going to be, she's staying with me for a little while whilst we decide what to do. She's not allowed to go out just yet, but you and your friends can come over sometimes." The chief suggested

"When can I come over?" Mike asks.

"How about this, you stay here for another hour or so until I finish up and I'll take you over there to see her and we can discuss things then?"

Mike was extremely enthusiastic with this plan. He couldn't wait to see El, he missed her so much whilst she was gone and he barely saw her last night. He and Steve continued to play some poker as there wasn't much going on around the station.

The chief finally finished up his paperwork and grabbed Mike so they could go home. Mike hopped in that SUV with a huge smile on his face. He was going to see Eleven again.

2. Chapter 2: A New Hope

It was a long drive through the woods to Hopper's cabin. Well it seemed like a long drive for Mike but in reality it was only ten minutes. Mike was more nervous than ever before, finally he and El were going to hang out together.

He had so many ideas for what to do with her. He wanted to introduce her to the entertainment world with classic movies such as Star Wars, Jaws and Grease. He also found out that the chief was a big Billy Joel fan and has a bunch of his records. Mike was going to show her Piano Man and Uptown Girl.

When Hopper pulled up outside the dirty old cabin, Mike slowly got out of the car and walked up to the front door. He rapped his knuckles slowly against the wooden door. A beautiful young girl's face appears as the door opens, it's Eleven.

"El, it's so good to see you, I have so many things planned we can do." Mike said.

"Hi Mike." El says using her limited vocabulary. She wraps him in his arms and he returns the favour as they share a tight affectionate hug.

They all proceed inside and Hopper locks the door from the inside, he then shuts the blinds. Even though El doesn't need hiding anymore he still does this as it has developed into a habit after the past year.

During their year of hiding out in the cabin, El and Hopper watched countless movies and several different TV programs. Apart from the lessons Hopper would give her each night, this was how El would learn new words and social skills, from movies.

Mike began rattling off different movies he loved and El remembered some of them but she stayed quite as she could see how enthusiastic he was about showing her all these movies.

"Chief, how long can I stay here?" Mike asked.

"I don't know kid, I think we better have you back before dinner or

your mom will panic. You got about four hours." Chief answers.

Turning to face El, Mike says "So we can fit in two movies in that time, you pick which ones we will watch."

Mike laid out five movies he had found whilst rummaging through the chief's cabin. These movies were: A New Hope, Taxi Driver, The Godfather, Annie Hall and One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest.

After examining each movie carefully before choosing. She recognised one of them, Taxi Driver. She and Hopper had watched it several months ago, for the next week afterwards he kept going on about Robert De Niro and how he was the best actor. El finally picked Star Wars: A New Hope and The Godfather.

They started by watching Star Wars, it was clear to El that Mike loved this movie. He watched intensely as if it was the first time he'd seen this, in full honestly it was like his eighth time watching it. El didn't like the movie at all, it made her scared and brought up terrible memories.

Watching the people use the force was what ruined the movie for her, it was exactly the same as her gift. Despite the fact that her powers were dead useful she hated them. She hated the reminder that she was different, she hated that no matter how hard Hopper and everyone tried she would never have a normal childhood or be a normal kid.

El managed to put on a brave face for Mike as she did not want him to worry, he was ecstatic and he turned to address El

"So El, What do you think?" He says enthusiastically

"Good." El manages in a voice barely louder than a whisper. Mike was oblivious to the fear she was exhibiting.

Mike pulled out the tape and replaced with The Godfather. El was anxious to watch this movie, she hoped that it would not be as unbearable as the previous movie.

Mike sat back down on the couch and pressed play. As the movie started El rested her head on Mike, feeling comfort from his shoulder.

After an intense couple of hours the credit's finally appeared and El was in shock at the extreme quality of Movie she had just watched. She could not contain her excitement with the cinematic journey they had been apart of.

"Mike, Mike that was amazing." El exclaims.

"Yeah it was really good." Mike replies.

"I'm gonna make him an offer he can't refuse." El recites the famous line.

Whilst El is reciting the popular films from the line Hopper leaves his bedroom and walks into the living room with the kids. He hears El's impersonations and immediately becomes frustrated. Whenever he and El had watched a popular film, El would start reciting the best lines for the next week or so. After they had finished the Bond series, Hopper was considering taping El's mouth shut if he heard that bloody British accent again.

"Jesus Wheeler, she's not gonna stop talking about the movie for a fortnight." Hopper frustratingly says.

"Oh, sorry chief." Mike responds with a little bit of fear in his voice.

"It's all good kid, pack up your things and say goodbye, I need to take you home." Hopper tells the boy.

Mike quickly gathered up the belongings he brought with him to the cabin. He said goodbye to Eleven.

"I'll be back soon, I promise." Mike says to El as he closes the door behind him and walks towards the chief's car.

"Promise." El whispers to herself.

The past year had been the most traumatic time of Eleven's life, the fears she faced whilst on the run was unspeakably worse than whilst she was prisoner in the laboratory. She learned what the real world was and how extremely difficult it was adjusting to a life outside the lab. Sometimes she even wished she was back there because everything made sense to her there.

El had experienced emotions that she failed to understand and deal with properly. Specifically her feeling towards others, Hopper, Papa and Mike. She was forced to come to an understanding that Papa was evil, she never liked how she was treated at his hands but she never realised how other people outside of the lab treated people.

Her feelings based around Mike really confused her and terrified her at the same time. From the moment they met in the woods that dark stormy night and he took her into his basement she developed great feelings of adoration. These feelings quickly escalated in their brief week together after he continuously protected her. That night in the school was when everything became real to her. For as long as she lives she will always remember the warm, tingling sensation that was sent throughout her entire body as he placed his lips upon hers.

The many months she spent away from him hiding in the cabin were dreadfully painful to her, to hear him calling her name through the walkie talkie broke her heart, the devastation she felt from not being able to respond was unbearable.

When she left the cabin to go find him, she couldn't care less about Hopper's stupid rules, she didn't care about the bad men catching her again, she only cared about Mike. She would give up her safety to have been with Mike.

When she heard his easily recognisable voice in the gym, she immediately followed the voice and was about to sprint into the gym and hold him close to her until she noticed the girl with him. She felt pain, her body was fine but she felt pain, deep pain in her chest. For the first time ever she realised what the feeling of jealousy is. She should have been with Mike, not this mouth breather. Her jealousy took over and she wanted to hurt this girl with Mike.

Now that Mike was back with her and they could see each other again El was not going to let that mouth breather near him ever again.

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"Stalker come on, you've got to put your weight on your back foot

when you turn." The girl with bright orange hair and hundreds of freckles across her face tells her friend.

Maxine Mayfield's life had been a complete whirlwind in the past couple months. After her Dad was arrested a few years ago her mom became a heavy drinker, she met Neil Hargrove in a bar and they got married.

She was forced to move from her home in California and dragged to Hawkins, Indiana. Her household in Hawkins was terrifying. It was a house of drinking, smoking and violence. Her mom and stepdad would get in arguments constantly and he would even hit her on occasions. He takes all his frustrations out on her mom and her stepbrother, Billy. As a result of being beaten by his father Billy would sometimes take his anger out on Max. He had never actually punched her but recently she had become more worried he would. All in all, her house was hell.

At school she somehow became friends with the Hawkins nerds who were actually some pretty cool dudes, except they had been extremely cryptic around her. Eventually she approached Lucas, her favourite in the group and asked him to explain everything to her. Lucas refused.

That night was horrific for Max. She never excelled at making friends at school, all the girls at her schools thought she was too tomboy and they didn't like her, whilst all the guys were jerks. She often found herself just riding her skateboard behind the school during recess. Now at Hawkins, she had finally found a group of friends that she got along with and they didn't treat her badly.

She thought she was finally in the party and they would start being completely open with her. When Lucas, the most accepting and most understanding person in the party utterly refused to tell her what was going on she became depressed. She rode home and all her emotions that she had been repressing since her mom got together with that asshole and ruined her life finally exploded out of her and she began bawling.

Max's tears were still dripping down her face almost an hour later when she heard a large bang. It was Billy's bedroom door, her

stepdad had caught him smoking marijuana. Billy was being beaten and attacked with a belt by his father.

Almost thirty minutes after Billy had been bashed by Neil, he stormed into Max's room with every intention of hurting her. However Max had become increasingly worried about her safety so she had locked herself in the bathroom and slept in there to avoid a beating.

The next day Lucas explained everything to her, every single crazy thing that had happened in Hawkins the year before. Max thought he was bullshitting her, until she finally realised he was serious.

The incredible things she witnessed over the following days is enough to drive anyone crazy. She was more frightened than she had even been whilst the demodogs were attacking. Nothing Billy could ever do to her would frighten her more than the demodogs, but Lucas wasn't frightened he stood in front of her the entire time. He stood in front to ensure that if any demodogs got past Steve they would have to kill him before they could harm her. She noticed everything he had done for her recently and crazily enough, she could sense that she was falling for him.

"I'm trying Max but these things are hard to ride." Lucas reasoned.

Max wasn't the only one in the party falling for another member, Lucas knew he needed her, Lucas knew he was going to be with her. He was the one who brought her into the party, he was the one who told her everything, he was the one who was falling for her.

After the Mind Flayer incident Max complained to the group that they needed to learn how to ride skateboards as they are so much more convenient than bikes. Everyone else told her there was no way they would try that stupid thing, but Lucas said he'd give it a crack if she would teach him.

"You need to push off with your feet, build momentum, put your weight backwards and turn with your body." Max says to the dark skinned boy.

"Okay." Lucas says getting frustrated with his failures.

Lucas thinks carefully about everything Max has told him about riding a skateboard. All the tips and tricks and he begins to focus. He puts his left foot on the front of the board and slightly raises his right leg, he lowers and pushes hard against the ground with his right foot. He fixes his stance and quickly gains momentum, then before he runs into the wall he turns. He keeps going until he reaches Max.

Max's face has a wide smile, she is over the moon. "Oh my god, you did it, I told you it wasn't that hard." She exclaims and throws her arms around his neck and they quickly hug. Both wanting to hold on longer but didn't want it to become awkward.

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Jonathan Byers was driving along the slippery bitumen of Maple Street, with an excited Will Byers sitting next to him in the passenger seat. Jonathan was dropping Will off at his friend Mike's house. Jonathan was exceptionally nervous whilst driving, Mike's older sister was Nancy Wheeler. Nancy was perfect in Jonathon's eyes and he had liked her since they bonded over the tragic events of 1983. Recently, after an eye opening evening with Murray Bauman, Nancy and Jonathan had slept together.

They had finally revealed their feelings to each other and they would have talked about what this meant for them if the mind flayer hadn't taken over Will. They still hadn't talked about their relationship and he was going to do it today.

Upon arriving at the Wheeler residence, Jonathan parked his Ford LTD and he and Will proceeded to the front door. After knocking several times someone finally answered the door. It was Nancy.

"Hey Will, Mike down in the basement." Nancy says as the youngest Byers walks downstairs.

"Nancy we need to talk." Jonathan says nervously.

"Yes we do." Nancy responds just as nervously.

Nancy's love life confused the hell out of her sometimes. She had

always had feelings for Jonathan even though she was with Steve. Nancy had always wondered what things would be like if she took the risk and broke up with Steve to be with Jonathan. Usually she was in over her head and bewildered but ever since Murray analysed her like that it has been clear, Jonathan is what she wants. Scratch that, Jonathan is what she needs.

Before Jonathan could get a word in, Nancy jumped into his arms and began kissing him harder than she had ever kissed before. The kiss was so passionate and full of love that words were not needed to explain how she felt about their relationship.

After several moments of making out, the two teenagers finally broke apart for air. Jonathan mustered up all his courage and looked Nancy dead in those sparkling blue eyes and said.

"Nancy be mine, be my girlfriend."

"Yes." Nancy said softly before she immediately placed her soft lips on his again.